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DISCUSSION AND CORRESPONDENCE

THE CENTRAL ARAWAKS: A REPLY TO DR. ROTH

IN the issue of the *American Anthropologist* for July-September, 1920, pp. 291-3, Dr. Roth published some "Comments" which had appeared February 22, 1920, in the *Daily Chronicle*, Demarara, as a "Book Review."

When "The Central Arawaks" was published I sent Dr. Roth a copy and asked him to review it. He replied, October 9, 1919, that "it would hardly be fair to Melville and Ogilvie" for him to do so. Knowing that he had spent six months among the Wapisianas after I had visited them and that he would see Melville and Ogilvie to whom I had also sent copies, I had reason to expect the honest criticism I coveted. The unexplainable animus exhibited and the character of his "Comments" destroy any value they might otherwise have, as the following letter indicates. It will be observed that the letter, which is published here by permission, was written for another purpose.

November 15, 1920.

DR. CLARK WISSLER, President

American Anthropological Association
Washington, D. C.

Dear Dr. Wissler: Permit me to supplement my letter of November 13 with an additional observation. I have just read Roth's criticism of "The Central Arawaks," in No. 3 of the A. A. and am struck by his remark on p. 292, "The author should remember that the history and language of any of our Guiana tribes is not to be picked up by a few months' cursory travel, with notes and queries obtained en route, even when the expedition is backed by a lavish expenditure of money." This is another illustration of what I took the liberty of pointing out in my previous letter to you: this supercilious statement has no bearing whatever on the problems under discussion, but is simply a personal affront to Dr. Farabee and casts a serious reflection on the Institution to which he is attached. The concluding paragraph is just as insulting. The bold assertion of Mr. Roth that "the result has been a failure" does not at all follow from his preceding comments; he merely rectifies a few points of detail, none of which is fundamental, but a book is not to be regarded as a failure because it contains errors and even hundreds of errors. It is just this type of book which many times has advanced the progress of science, while numerous books, correct as tailors' dummies, merely exist on shelves, and have never exerted any influence. Mr. Roth does not give any proof for his grotesque generalization, nor does he

produce the evidence for his charge that the "grammar and language" (a very logical mode of speaking!) are unreliable: criticism must be specific and exhaustive, but not dogmatic and generalized. . . .

Very truly yours,

(Signed) B. LAUFER

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Nevertheless Dr. Roth has inadvertently rendered me a very great service. He will agree that Melville and Ogilvie are the only authorities on the region under discussion. He has taken my publication back to my original authorities, on the ground where, to some extent, he could make comparisons with his own observations, and the only points he finds to criticize in the whole material and social culture of the four tribes are: (a) "A couple of methods of catching small animals and deer . . . neither of these devices have been hitherto seen or heard of . . ."; (b) "the bird trap lacks the upper portion of the peg . . . upon which the whole delicacy of the trap depends"; (c) "the form of spring-basket fish trap . . . is unknown."

All of the other ethnological material may be accepted since it has been passed unchallenged by the highest authorities. Furthermore there is no new information at hand from this source except that there is an "upper portion of the peg." The following facts must also be kept in mind: (a) No one had previously investigated the methods of catching small animals and deer in vogue among these people; (b) an Indian drew the picture of the bird trap (I am sorry the doctor did not supply the missing part); (c) Saturday, January 31, 1914, Ogilvie found a spring-basket fish trap at the third Mapidian village, and on Sunday morning, February 8, 1914, our old Taruma guide brought in two Haimara fish which he had caught in the spring-basket traps he carried with him. Our Wapisiana boys said that their people also used such traps, but I did not see these employed among them. We took four boys on our travels in the interior among other tribes for five months; they were greatly interested and called our attention to similarities and differences in cultures. We recommend our method of study to those who think they are close observers.

About one third of Dr. Roth's review of a book on ethnology is given to four possible mistakes in the identification of more than a hundred plants and animals. He indeed says: "The value of the list of fish poisons is inappreciable in view of the absence of any scientific identification of the plants." I regret that no botanist has identified the plants used for fish poisons. I published the local names with sufficient

description for their recognition. I gave the ethnological data concerning the extraction and use of the poisons and also I described the effect of the poisons on the fish. I still think it was well worth doing even if I could not supply the Latin names in parentheses. I am surprised that Dr. Roth, a medical man, has not taken advantage of his wonderful opportunity to study some of these poisons from the point of view of their medicinal value.

Dr. Roth makes the broad statement that my *Wapisiana* linguistic material is "hopelessly inaccurate." He does not claim personal knowledge but speaks upon the authority of Melville without furnishing any evidence whatsoever. For twenty-four years Melville had been most intimately associated with the *Atarois*, while Ogilvie had been living and working with the *Wapisianas* for fourteen years. Ogilvie had made collections for museums with scientific notes on the use of the specimens. He had made a *Wapisiana* vocabulary of useful words along with their grammatical constructions in sentences. When he and Melville disagreed about *Wapisiana* I tested the matter as far as possible with the Indians and accepted the better authority.

In the last paragraph Dr. Roth speaks of "one bright spot . . . the excellence of the illustrations." I am in full agreement! Several of the best illustrations are from Melville's negatives and his name is published *with the photographs*. "One plate [there were five] . . . requires explanation" because it has been published elsewhere with a different legend. He finishes with a flourish and an interrogation, "which is correct?" Now, the good doctor knew at the time he was writing that it was Melville's photograph (he had seen Melville), that I did not write the earlier legend, and that I was in no way responsible for its first publication (the journal referred to said I was still in the field).

The "lavish expenditure of money" is considered a legitimate argument against any American in many countries, but Dr. Roth has the honor of being the first to use it in scientific discussion. But how inappropriate in southern British Guiana where I lived and traveled for five months without seeing a penny! No one can pay for lodging or assistance at Melville's place where Dr. Roth made his headquarters for six months.

Note Dr. Roth's exact scientific methods. He begins by misstating the title and contents of the book. He refers to articles in the *American Anthropologist*, the *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, and the "*Philadelphia Museum Journal*" (there is no such publication) without giving dates. He criticises the "whole of the area under considera-

tion" and refers to Mr. Melville only as authority, yet neither he nor Mr. Melville ever saw two of the four tribes under consideration. Neither of them ever visited the Wai-Wais, yet he says a certain trap is met with among the latter. Neither of them ever saw the interior forests, yet he is bold enough to say that certain trees do not grow there. It is to be observed that Dr. Roth does not quote Mr. Melville.

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WILLIAM C. FARABEE

INDIAN CORN HILLS

As a footnote to the neglected topic of Indian corn hills, described in such an interesting fashion by Messrs. Delabarre and Wilder (*American Anthropologist*, July-September, 1920), attention may be called to the existence of similar remnants of Indian agriculture in the vicinity of Mohegan, Conn. Unfortunately the writer did not make any of the careful measurements submitted by the authors of the article referred to, but perhaps memory will serve for a few outstanding features.

The corn hills observed, during a few days visit to Mohegan last August, are in two localities. One of them is an eight to ten acre pasture on high ground, a few minutes walk a little to the southeast of the Indian meeting house. The mounds which stud this field are, from the point of view of order, intermediary between those described by Lapham and the hills referred to at Assonet neck. They probably resemble quite closely those described at Northampton, Mass.

In the second locality, which is also pasture but farther towards the Thames River, and bordering on wooded land, the hills are quite irregularly scattered and few, if any, can be said to be in rows. It is said that mounds also existed in a field close to the first locality mentioned, but within a year or two the white man's plow has entirely obliterated all traces of them.

It is of no little significance that there is an unbroken tradition at Mohegan regarding these corn hills. Anyone asked will point them out as such. As soon as an opportunity presents itself the writer will endeavor to examine them with more care.

PHILADELPHIA, PA.

A. I. HALLOWELL

A HAIDA KINSHIP TERM AMONG THE TSIMSHIAN

ON page 269 of the *American Anthropologist* for 1920 (No. 3) I suggested that the Nass River vocative *hadi*¹ "father," used by female